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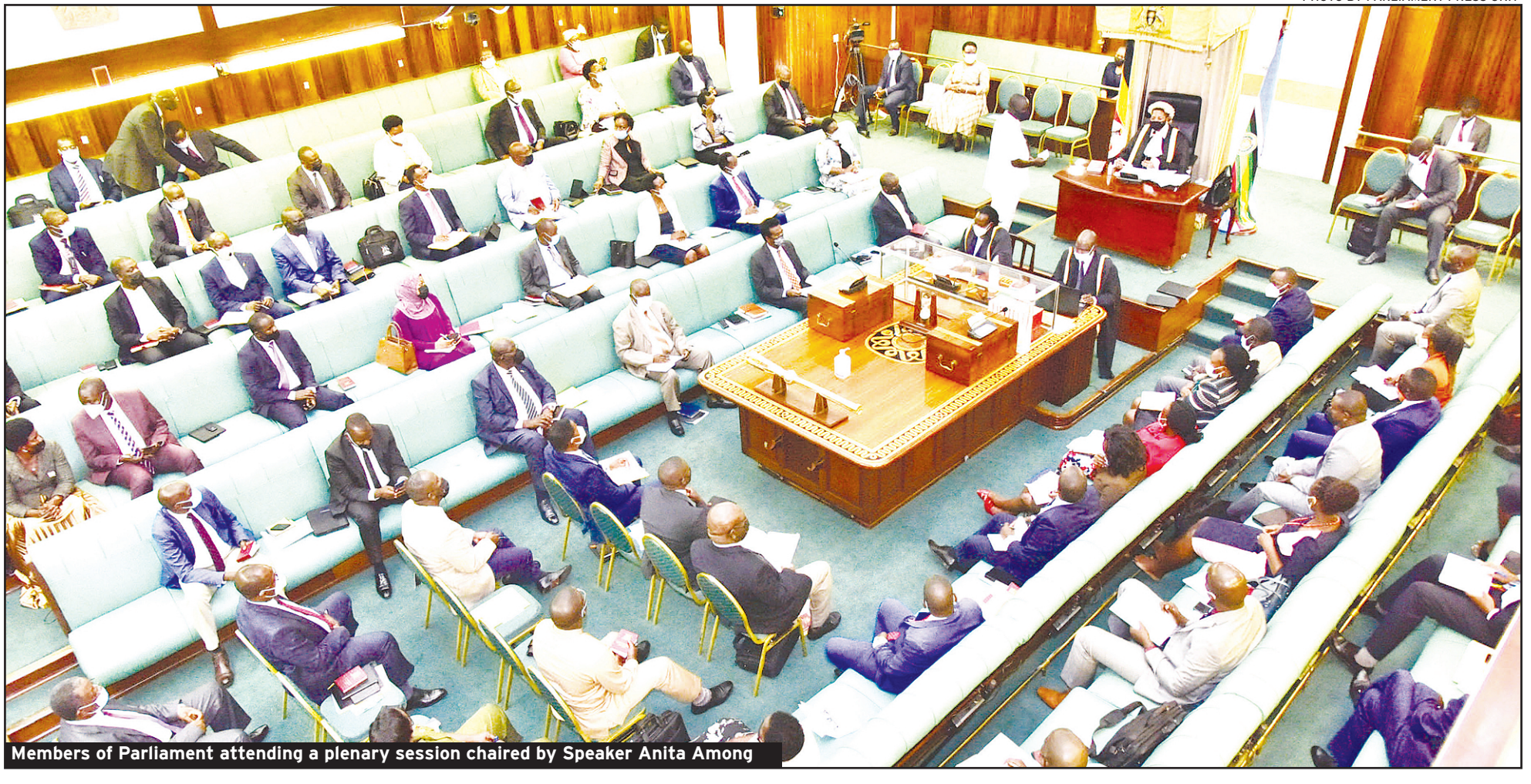


Members of Parliament attending a plenary session chaired by Speaker Anita Among

PARLIAMENT PASSES 23 BILLS IN ONE YEAR

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY
PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

By Vision Reporter

With very colourful events of the swearing-in of MPs four-day event, starting on May 17, 2021, the journey of the 11th Parliament started.

Amid high optimism and commitments to make a big difference, MPs from across the political divide promised a Parliament that would prioritise the interests and aspirations of Ugandans.

One of the major turning points of the 11th Parliament was on May 24, 2021, when the former Omoro County MP, Jacob L'Okori Oulanyah and Bukedea Woman MP, Anita Annet Among, were successfully elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

The first major undertaking of the 11th Parliament was the vetting of the 82 ministers President Yoweri Museveni had appointed, which started with the approval of Vice-President Jessica Alupo and Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja on June 14, 2021.

The Appointments Committee of Parliament, chaired by then Deputy Speaker Anita Among, compelled the appointed ministers to make commitments to make a big difference in their sectors before they could be approved.

36 Other business transacted by Parliament

35 Leader of the Opposition unveiled a comprehensive legislative agenda

BILLS HANDLED BY

By Vision Reporter

At the end of the first year of the 11th Parliament, over 23 Bills, which address various issues of national importance were enacted. Considering the fact that the 11th Parliament started when the country was still in a lockdown, with many COVID-19 related challenges and the subsequent illness and death of former Speaker Jacob Oulanyah, passing 23 Bills is considered exceptional performance.

The Finance Committee (left) meeting government officials at Parliament. More MPs are now introducing private member's Bills

THE ADMINISTRATION OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

On October 5, 2021, Parliament passed the Administration of Parliament (Amendment) Bill. Section 2 (2) of the Administration of Parliament Act now includes the Deputy Speaker of Parliament as a member of the Parliamentary Commission. This is in conformity with Article 82 of the Constitution, which highlights the mandate of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

The Parliamentary Commission will now be composed of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of Government Business, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, the finance minister and four backbench commissioners comprising three from the ruling party and one from the leading opposition party.

THE NSSF (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

Workers celebrated when Parliament passed the National Social Security (NSSF) (Amendment) Bill on November 24, 2021.

Since April 2020, there had been continuous public pressure on Parliament and the Executive to pass the Bill to enable workers get midterm access to their savings to cushion them against financial hardships occasioned by the effects of COVID-19.

After the passing of the Bill, the former Speaker, Jacob Oulanyah, who presided over the sitting, said he could then breathe since he had been under immense pressure from the public to have the Bill passed.

The NSSF Bill, which is already a law that is being implemented, among other things provides for midterm access of 20% for members who are 45 years and above and a midterm access of 50% to NSSF members who are persons with disabilities at 40 years and above.

After protracted negotiations between the leadership of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the Opposition at the beginning of December 2021, Parliament passed the three oil Bills of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Bill, the Public Finance Management Amendment Bill and the Income Tax Amendment Bill. The three Bills are part of the necessary measures for facilitating the commencement of oil production in Uganda.

The Speaker of Parliament, Anita Among

THE EACOP BILL, 2021

On December 9, 2021, Parliament passed the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Bill 2021. The Bill was aimed at formalising the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) company.

The shareholders of EACOP are France's TotalEnergies with 62%, Uganda National Oil Company at 15%, Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation at 15%, and China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) at 8%.

The crude oil pipeline project is expected to cost $3.5b, with 60% coming in as debt financing and the remaining 40% as equity. The law dedicates an entire section to national content and outlines 15 services that have been ring-fenced for Ugandan companies.

101 PLENARY SITTINGS

Many of the over 101 plenary sittings so far of the 11th Parliament were characterised by lack of Bills to handle business because the Executive took long to start submitting them to Parliament.

Among the Bills which were passed in the final stage of the first year of the 11th Parliament recently, are the Tax (Amendment) and Supplementary Appropriation Bills.

Due to delays by the ministers to introduce Bills to address various issues within their sectors, many MPs have moved motions and have been given the green light by Parliament to introduce private member's Bills.

THE INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

On December 14, 2021, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2021, another of the required oil laws, was debated and approved by Parliament.

The Bill aimed at amending the Income Tax Act Cap. 340 to provide for windfall tax and cap the allowable deductions per year to the cost recoverable limit as stipulated in the Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) in petroleum operations.

Through the Income Tax (Amendment Bill), Government, among other objectives, sought to limit recoverable costs by oil companies to avoid tendencies of factoring in unnecessary costs and inflating of the costs.

In many African countries where international oil companies were involved, there have been concerns on oil companies inflating recoverable costs at the expense of the countries that own the oil.

THE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

On the same day of December 14, 2021, the Public Finance Management (Amendment Bill) was debated and passed by Parliament.

The Bill provided guidelines for operationalising oil agreements on the revenue from oil. The Bill gave powers to the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) to collect and use oil revenue in paying oil companies their recoverable costs without seeking Parliament approval and afterwards deposit the balance into the Petroleum Fund account under the finance ministry.

This was aimed at enabling UNOC to expeditiously fulfil financial obligations to the various stakeholders that invested in the country's oil industry.

THE LANDLORD AND TENANT BILL, 2021

On February 1, 2022, Parliament debated and passed the Landlord and Tenant Bill, 2021, with various clauses that were aimed at ensuring a harmonious working relationship between landlords and tenants and how to resolve conflicts between the two.

The Bill has provisions aimed at regulating the relationship between landlords and tenants to reform and consolidate the law relating to letting of premises and provide for the responsibilities of landlords and tenants.

The Bill, among other provisions, permits the landlords to access the tenants' premises and take possession of the property to recover accumulated rent arrears.

THE MINING AND MINERALS BILL, 2021

On February 17, 2022, Parliament, following guidance from the natural resources committee which had processed the Bill, passed the Mining and Minerals Bill, 2021. Among other objectives, the Bill seeks to empower local artisan miners to benefit in utilising opportunities in the mining sector.

As one of the interventions for developing Uganda's mining sector and anchoring on the best international practice, the Bill sought to establish a transparent and competitive process of bidding for mining licences, which has not been the case.

The Bill is of great significance to Uganda's economy since gold surpassed tourism and coffee to become the leading foreign exchange earner for the country,

THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

fetching an average of about $180m every month.

The Bill seeks to organise, register, license, regulate and transform artisanal and small-scale mining in Uganda.

The new law introduces a progressive artisanal and small-scale mining licensing scheme for empowering area communities where minerals exist.

It is important to note that gold, which is one of the common minerals mined in Uganda, is currently Uganda's leading foreign exchange earner among all exports, fetching an average of about $180m (sh648b) per month.

Parliament rejected a number of proposals the Government had put in the Bill such as creation of a minerals protection force and inclusion of building substances like sand, clay and murram among minerals.

Parliament also increased royalties from minerals revenue for local governments/districts from 10% to 15%. The central government will take 70%, sub-counties 10% and land owners 5%.

A view of the Parliament in Kampala. The leadership of the House wants to ensure Parliament business is expeditiously handled

PENDING PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILLS

Various Members of Parliament were granted leave to introduce a total of 12 private member's Bills. Some of these Bills include the Surrogacy and Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, 2021 by Tororo Woman MP, Hon. Sarah Opendi, the Constitutional (Amendment) Bill by Kibanda South MP, Hon. Jacob Karubanga, the Public Enterprise Reform and Divestiture (Repeal) Bill and the Constitution (Amendment) Bill by Igara East MP, Hon. Michael Mawanda, as well as the Local Content Bill by Kassanda North MP, Hon. Patrick Nsamba.

Other pending Bills include the National Sports Bill by Budiope East MP Moses Magogo, the National Legal Aid Bill by Kumi Municipality MP, Hon. Silas Aogon, and the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill, 2022 by Kampala Central MP, Hon. Muhammad Nsereko.

The education ministry is in discussions with Magogo to convince him to take over his Bill since it has a charge on the consolidated fund. It was on that basis that the Bill was denied a certificate of financial implication.

THE SUCCESSION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

On February 8, 2022, Parliament passed the Succession (Amendment) Bill, which sought to give women equal rights with men in inheriting the properties of their parents. An amendment of Section 2 of the principal Act now outlaws the term 'illegitimate child' and replaces it with 'a child produced outside wedlock'.

The reasoning behind the amendment is that the term 'illegitimate' is discriminatory following a court decision in 2007. In 2007, the Constitutional Court in the Law Advocacy for Women in Uganda versus Attorney General ruled that several provisions of the Succession Act contravened Articles 21(1), (2), (3), 31, and 33(6) of the Constitution and, as such, were null and void.

Court ruled that several provisions of the old Succession Act were discriminatory on the basis of sex. Sections 2(n) (i) and (ii) of the Succession Act defining "legal heir" provided that a male heir was preferred to a female one.

Section 27 of the Act, which previously indicated the distribution of the property of only a male intestate, was declared null and void in the case of Advocacy for Women in Uganda, and the new amendment now covers both male and female intestates.

THE MARKETS BILL, 2021

On February 15, 2022, Parliament passed the Markets Bill, 2021, which is aimed at regulating markets. This Bill, which is a private member's Bill, was authored by Workers' MP, Margaret Rwabushaija.

The Markets Bill,which will replace the 1942 Markets Act, seeks to provide for the procedure of establishment, management and administration of public and private markets, categories of markets, licensing of private markets and registration of markets. It will also provide for determination and collection of market fees.

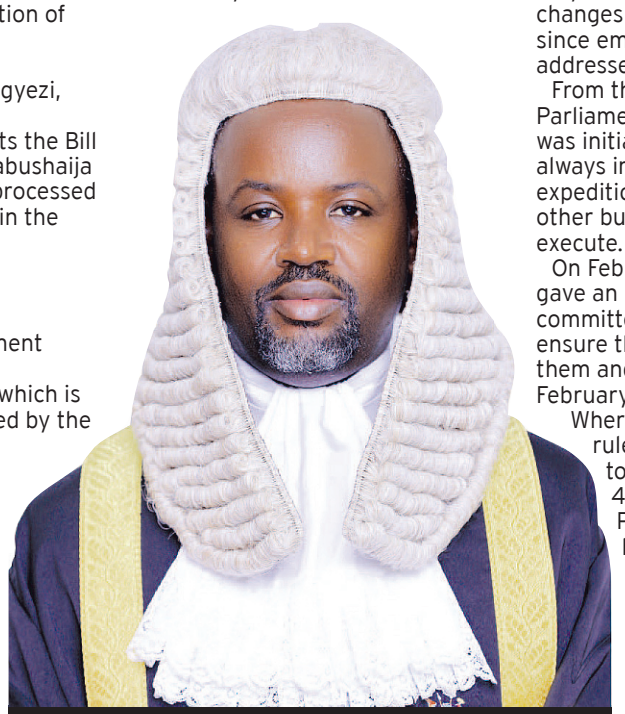
The Minister for Local Government, Raphael Magyezi, told the House that the Government fully supports the Bill and had worked with Rwabushaija and the committee that processed it to ensure it comes out in the best form.

THE ELECTRICITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

On April 14, 2022, Parliament passed the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which is one of the few Bills drafted by the current Cabinet.

The objects of the Bill are to provide for a staggered term of office for the members of the Electricity Regulatory Authority; provide for additional functions of the authority; increase funds allocated to the authority from 0.3% to 0.7% of revenue received from generated electrical energy; and to provide for deterrent penalties for theft of electricity and vandalism of electrical facilities.

The energy ministry explained that the proposal to amend the Electricity Act was intended to remove inconsistencies in the law, introduce flexibility in its implementation and to streamline operations of the electricity sector.



The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Thomas Tayebwa

The ministry noted that since the Electricity Act was enacted 23 years ago in 1999, many changes and challenges have since emerged, which have to be addressed in the law.

From the onset, the Speaker of Parliament, Anita Among, who was initially Deputy Speaker, always implored committees to expeditiously handle Bills and other business given to them to execute.

On February 2, 2022, Among gave an ultimatum to all committees with pending Bills to ensure they expeditiously process them and submit reports by February 10, 2022.

Whereas the Parliament rules require a committee to process a Bill within 45 days, the previous Parliament committees had a tendency of taking long — sometimes up to a year to complete Bills before them. The new leadership of Parliament is determined to change that trend and ensure that Parliament business is expeditiously executed.

As an innovation of the new leadership of Parliament, the passing of all the above Bills was characterised by negotiations between the ruling party side and the opposition in determining what was in the best interest of the country.

It is, however, important to note that many of the 12 Bills Parliament passed are yet to be assented to by President Yoweri Museveni and, therefore, are yet to become laws.

It is also important to note that since much of the business Parliament transacts originates from the Executive, the performance of Parliament can be slowed if the Executive is slow in initiating business for Parliament.

Last year, both Among and the former Speaker Jacob Oulanyah implored the Executive many times to give work to Parliament through tabling Bills in the House.

THE PHYSICAL PLANNERS REGISTRATION BILL, 2021

On April 2022, Parliament passed the Physical Planners Registration Bill which provides for the establishment of a physical planners registration board to guide and regulate the work of physical planners.

Commenting about the Bill, the Minister for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Judith Nabakooba, said: "As government, we are saying physical planning should be taken seriously. If we do not streamline physical planning, we shall be in disaster and end up having slums."

To address the challenge of fake physical planners, Parliament passed stringent penalties for anyone who falsely pretends to be a physical planner. Such a person commits an offense and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine of sh2m or imprisonment not exceeding two years. Government had in the original Bill proposed sh960,000 but Parliament increased it to sh2m to make it more deterrent.

THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE BILL, 2021

On May 4, Parliament passed the Fisheries and Aquaculture Bill, which seeks to organise, regulate and develop the fisheries sector. The objective of the Bill is to consolidate and reform the law relating to the management of fisheries, fisheries products and aquaculture. The Bill will help government to ensure those who engage in fisheries activities have licences and permits.

The Bill seeks to address challenges and emerging issues in the regulation and management of the fisheries sector which are not addressed under the current law,

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MPS PASS OVER 7 BILLS IN MAY

From page 33

including overcapacity, invasion of water bodies by aquatic weeds, limited support and investment in aquaculture, institutional challenges, excessive fishing pressure, destructive fishing practices and illicit fish trade in immature fish.

Fish exports are the third leading foreign exchange earners for the country after gold and coffee, fetching the country an average of $170m (shSh629b) annually. The sector employs two million Ugandans.

TAX BILLS PASSED

On May 17 and 18, Parliament considered over seven Tax Bills in the course of which some proposals that were regarded anti-people were rejected.

The Tax Bills that government presented to Parliament included the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Stamp Duty (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Tax Appeals Tribunal (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Tax Procedures Code (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Uganda Revenue Authority (Amendment) Bill 2022, the Finance Amendment Bill, 2022, and the Value Added Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

The State Minister for Finance, Hon. Henry Musasizi, explained that the amendments to the various tax laws were aimed at providing clarifications of ambiguous provisions, closing loopholes in the tax laws and simplifying the tax laws with a view of supporting tax administration and promoting voluntary taxpayer compliance to enhance revenue collection.

Parliament rejected a government proposal to make land a business asset, which would subject land transactions to taxation.

Parliament also rejected a government proposal in the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to extend Bujagali Power Project exemption from income tax for another five years.

Parliament, however, granted Bujagali exemption of one more year pending investigations into the operations of the company.

The Speaker of Parliament, Anita Among, constituted an ad-hoc committee headed by Sheema Municipality MP, Hon. Dickson Kateshumbwa to investigate the Bujagali Power Project.

Other members on the committee are hounarable Members of Parliament Paul Omara (IND, Otuke), Karim Masaba (IND, Mbale Industrial Division East), Nathan Nandala-Mafabi (FDC, Budadiri County West), Loy Katali (NUP, Jinja district Woman), Herbert Tayebwa (NRM, Kashongi County), Faith Nakut (NRM, Napak district Woman), Esther Afoyochan (NRM, Zombo district Woman) and Muhammad Muwanga Kivumbi (NUP, Butambala).

The State Minister for Finance in charge of general duties, Henry Musasizi, appearing before the Parliament Budget Committee recently

APPROPRIATION BILL FOR THE 2022/2023 NATIONAL BUDGET

The climax of the first year of the 11th Parliament happened on May 20, during which Parliament passed the Appropriation Bill for the 2022/2023 sh48.1trillion national budget which focuses on the socio-economic transformation of the country.

With the intervention of Parliament, government increased the allocation to the Parish Development Model to sh1,050b from the initial allocation of sh465b. The Parish Development Model is the main flagship project for improving the economic welfare of Ugandans in the 2022/2023 National Budget.

Parliament is concerned that whereas government has injected so much into Bujagali, the company continues to charge very high tariffs for the power generated.

Parliament supported government's proposal to amend Rental Tax to reduce the expenses deducted before removing the tax. Consequently, the Rental tax for corporate companies was reduced from 25% to 15% after 50% reduction of expenses. Previously, the expenses deducted were 75% of the company's rental income.

The finance ministry explained that with a reduction to 50% as expenses that have to be deducted, government is likely to collect more taxes, especially from companies that have been hiding under expenses to pay very little.

Parliament also rejected a proposal in the Traffic and Road Safety (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to reduce the number of years for cars imported into the country from 15 to nine. The Parliament Finance Committee argued that for an economy that is yet to recover from the effects of COVID-19, such measures, which will make cars expensive in Uganda, need to be brought after the economy has recovered.

PARLIAMENT REJECTED A PROPOSAL IN THE TRAFFIC AND ROAD SAFETY (AMENDMENT) BILL TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF YEARS FOR CARS IMPORTED INTO THE COUNTRY FROM 15 TO NINE

Parliament resolved that such measures could be commenced in the 2023/2024 Financial Year (FY) in a phased manner.

It is, however, important to note that government, through Musasizi, withdrew the Finance (Amendment) Bill and the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) (Amendment) Bill to allow further consultation and research.

In the URA Bill, government wanted to give the URA Commissioner General powers to appoint some of the technical staff and, in the Finance Amendment Bill, government wanted to make changes in the collection of Non-Tax Revenue (NTR).

The Finance (Amendment) Bill sought to adjust NTR rates so that government will no longer use the Act to make any NTR adjustments or introduce new NTR sources.

The adjustment of the NTR in the dropped Bill meant that any introduction of new rates or adjustments in the existing NTR rates of the respective laws must be initiated by the parent Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

On the URA Amendment Bill, even before the minister withdrawing it, the committee had rejected it, arguing that such an amendment did not have to come through tax Bills, but needed to go through the normal process of amending non-tax Bills.

Factories producing the low cost opaque beer will in the new FY2022/2023 enjoy a tax relief intended to attract more local manufacturers into the alcohol production industry.

Following the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which Parliament passed on May 18, manufacturers of opaque beer will effective July 1, pay 12% or sh150 per litre of the beer produced instead of t the current 20% or sh230 per litre.

Opaque beers are locally sourced and manufactured beers using a low cost industrial process. An example of opaque beer includes Chibuku, a local brew that was produced by Nile Breweries Limited until 2018.

The chairperson of the Committee on Finance, Hon. Dr Keefa Kiwanuka, told the House that the proposal to reduce the excise duty rate on opaque beer would encourage the reopening of companies that had closed as a consequence of the higher tax.

In the FY2020/2021, companies were paying 30% or sh650 per litre in excise tax before the Act was amended in FY2021/2022 to reduce it to the current 20% or sh230 per litre.

Musasizi explained to Parliament that cabinet had resolved not to introduce new tax measures as part of the necessary interventions to aid the recovery of the economy, which was greatly hit by COVID-19.

According to documents from the finance ministry, government projects to collect a total of sh25.5trillion in the Financial Year 2022/2023.

THREE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILLS PASSED

It is important to note that on May 17, Parliament also passed three Supplementary Appropriation Bills amidst concerns that supplementary budgets reflect financial indiscipline on the side of the Executive. The Speaker and several legislators implored the finance ministry to ensure that mistakes are not repeated in future.

Some of the supplementary expenditures were for the past financial years and others were for the current FY2021/2022 of sh617.9b.

Some of the approved funds for different activities include the sh77b under State House for classified expenditure, sh64.49b to facilitate the Uganda People's Defence Forces Operation Shujaa in the Democratic Republic of Congo against the Allied Democratic Forces, sh87.5b for UPDF operations in Karamoja sub-region and sh251.7b for wage shortfalls.

Other Supplementary Expenditures Parliament approved included sh86.3b under the Office of the President to cater for external financing from EXIM Bank for the National Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation Skills Enhancement Project (NSTEI-SEP), sh66b for completion of Kayunga and Yumbe hospitals, and sh25b for works on security roads in the Karamoja region, among others.

Legislators tasked Musasizi with explaining how the budget for this financial year had shortfalls for salaries and wages when these are statutory expenditures that are always budgeted for first.

Musasizi replied that ever since the Budget was passed on May 31, 2021, there have been new recruitments, such as the appointment of ministers, presidential advisers, promotion of officers in the army and new recruitments at Parliament.

AS LOP, MPUUGA UNVEILED A COMPREHENSIVE OPPOSITION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA THAT WAS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND

MPUUGA HITS THE GROUND RUNNING

By Vision Reporter

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament (LOP), Mathias Mpuuga, hit the ground running as he assumed the most powerful opposition office in Parliament.

On August 27, 2021, he unveiled a comprehensive opposition legislative agenda, which was launched by the former Speaker, Jacob Oulanyah. It was the first of its kind.

ELECTORAL REFORMS

Top on the opposition legislative agenda was the need to push for early enactment of all the necessary electoral and constitutional reforms for creating credible electoral processes agreeable to all stakeholders.

Mpuuga said they compiled key reforms that Ugandans had been pushing for in the past like proposals for reforms that were contained in the 2014 Citizens Compact, which was an outcome of a nationwide consultative process that involved citizens, civil society, development partners, religious leaders, and political parties.

Mpuuga, who is also the MP for Nyendo-Mukungwe Division of Masaka City, pointed out the need for an Independent Electoral Commission, redefining the role of security organs in elections, amendment for transparent transmission of election results, restoration of presidential term limits and reducing the size of Parliament.

Others were restriction of supplementary expenditures, prohibiting leaders in the ruling party from using state resources during elections, competitive recruitment of leaders of state institutions, federal system of Government, giving more powers to local governments, and providing for the participation of Ugandans in the diaspora and prisons in voting.

He expressed disappointment that whereas most of the electoral and constitutional reforms he was proposing had already been agreed upon in the Citizens Compact of 2014, Government deferred consideration of the proposals in 2015, arguing that they would be handled through a constitutional review commission which to date is yet to be constituted.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Outside the electoral and constitutional reforms, the agenda called for legislative interventions for improving service delivery, revamping the health sector, improving the financing for education, prioritising games and sports, curbing of wasteful government expenditure, improving Parliament's oversight mandate to fight corruption and undertaking necessary measures for facilitating economic recovery. Others included making interventions for nationalising the economy through incentives for empowering local investors, undertaking necessary amendments for safeguarding press freedom, and providing proposals for improving the performance of Parliament as an institution.

The office of the LOP, through Mpuuga and shadow cabinet ministers, has produced many statements on various issues of national importance, which have even won the support of MPS of the ruling party (NRM).

HUMAN RIGHTS, ECONOMY

On August 4, 2021, the LOP presented a detailed response to President Yoweri Museveni's State of the Nation Address, faulting him for ignoring human rights violations, especially against opposition supporters by the security forces.

He also faulted him for not providing adequate interventions for resuscitating the economy from the effects of COVID-19.

On September 8, 2021, Parliament passed a resolution urging Government to reverse the directive requiring local governments to remit all the local revenue they collect to the Consolidated Fund.

The motion was supported by all the MPs present from across the political divide.

On November 9, last year, the shadow finance minister, Muhammad Muwanga Kivumbi, presented to Parliament a detailed statement on issues pertaining to half year budget releases for the 2021/2022 Financial Year, in which Government is faulted for overprioritisation of consumptive expenditures over development expenditure.

Muwanga Kivumbi expressed concern that out of sh21.7 trillion released for the first half of the 2021/2022 Financial Year, sh17.7 trillion had been allocated to recurrent expenditure and only sh4 trillion allocated to development expenditure.

On November 10, 2021, he presented the alternative development approach to government's Parish Development Model, in which, among several proposals, he called for the re-establishment of the state Co-operative Bank to provide low cost credit to co-operatives and SACCOS and for government to establish a Price Stabilisation Fund to safeguard farmers from exploitation.

Muwanga Kivumbi said putting together funds from the Microfinance Support Centre (sh133.29b), Pride Microfinance (sh113b) and Women Entrepreneurship Programme (sh32b), government would be having sh278.3b, which it could use to revive the Cooperative Bank.

He said the above interventions be complemented with revitalisation of the cooperative movement, re-establishment of district farm institutes and demonstration farms across the country.

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

On November 24, 2021, Mpuuga presented a statement to Parliament on shrinking civic space in which he condemned government curtailing civil liberties of NGOs, the media and political actors.

He argued that government acts of suppressing operations of civil society groups, opposition, cultural institutions, and the media were undermining Uganda's democratisation process.

In reference to government acts to suspend the operations of a number of NGOs and the Democracy Governance Facility, which is a consortium of development partners through which they fund activities for enhancing good governance and democracy, Mpuuga said the NRM Government was increasingly becoming autocratic and anti-democracy.

On November 30, last year, he presented before Parliament a statement on the new COVID-19 variant, proposing measures the Government needed to undertake to combat it.

EDUCATION SECTOR

On December 7, 2021, the LOP presented a detailed statement on the state of the education sector and lambasted government for keeping schools and other education institutions closed for so long, even when schools had resumed in neighbouring countries and others parts of the world.

He appealed to government to earmark some funds to support the private schools to recover from the COVID-19 effects as they planned to reopen.

On January 2, last year, President Museveni issued a directive for the closure of the Democratic Governance Facility premised on the allegation that the consortium of development partners was funding subversive activities under the guise of promoting democracy and good governance.

Most of the proposals Muwanga Kivumbi gave were adopted by the Parliament Budget Committee in its report. With the adoption of the committee, he abandoned his minority report.

The Opposition raised concern in the statement on the shrinking civic space that in the last general elections, security forces, which must be neutral, were used by the NRM Government to curtail operations of opposition parties and media.

CHARTER OF FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

In January, Muwanga Kivumbi presented before the Parliament Budget Committee a detailed response on the Government Charter of Fiscal Responsibility, in which he gave numerous proposals on the proper management of public finances on what government needed to do to expand the tax revenue base and limit the rate of borrowing.

RESPONSE TO BUDGET

On May 3, Mpuuga presented a detailed statement in response to the revised budget estimates for the 2022/2023 national budget. He argued that the proposed sh47.2 trillion national budget is unrealistic and not properly allocated, since sh33.5 trillion (71%) will be spent on recurrent expenditures and only sh13.7 trillion on development expenditures.

Raising concern that unspent funds for previous financial years are never reflected in the budget for the new financial year as balance carried forward, the LOP called for a special audit on how unspent balances are utilised in the course of the new financial year.

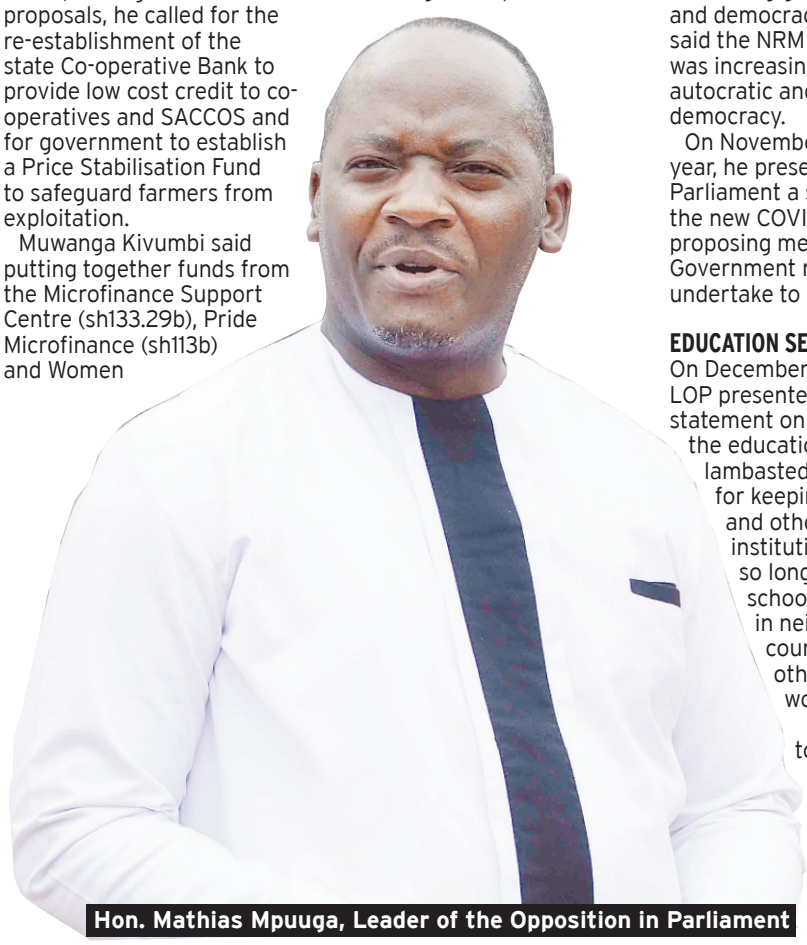
Calling for an end to the practice of government entities renting offices when government has a lot of land on which such entities can have their offices constructed, Mpuuga noted with concern that in the last five years, sh677.9b has been spent on rent.

ALTERNATIVE BUDGET POLICY

Some of the other key interventions of the Leadership of the Opposition in Parliament included the timely submission of alternative budget policy statements by the Opposition shadow ministers.

The LOP had several meetings with the shadow ministers and guided them on how to come up with high quality alternative proposals regarding their respective sectors. Many sector committees of Parliament have adopted proposals from the alternative policy statements of opposition shadow ministers to be part of their committee reports.

Going by the number of statements presented on various issues of national importance, including the legislative agenda within less than a year in office, Mpuuga is said to have already outperformed his predecessors.



Hon. Mathias Mpuuga, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament

BUSINESS TRANSACTED BY

Continued from page 31

COVID-19 TASK FORCE
On June 29, 2021, Speaker Among unveiled a Parliament COVID-19 task force led by the Bugweri County MP, Hon. Abdu Katuntu, which carried out investigations and interrogated relevant government ministers and officials on the interventions to combat the pandemic.

The findings and exposure of the gaps in addressing COVID-19 influenced government decisions, such as putting more efforts and resources into buying vaccines.

At the beginning of August 2021, the leadership of Parliament sent MPs on a recess to investigate how Emyooga funds had been distributed and managed in their constituencies

EMYOOGA INITIATIVE
The Emyooga, a presidential initiative on wealth and job creation, was rolled out in October 2020 to support groups of Ugandans involved in the same economic activities to improve their economic welfare.

In all the regions, MPs discovered that government officials who had been tasked with distributing the funds had grossly mismanaged the money and in many cases, it had been swindled.

MEDICAL INTERNS SUSPEND STRIKE
Towards the end of December 2021, medical interns called off their strike which had started on November 6, 2021. They were protesting against government delays to enhance their allowances as promised.

Following negotiations initiated by the former Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Oulanyah, with the Government Chief Whip, the Prime Minister, Ministry of Health, and the finance ministry, government was prompted to release sh35.2b to enhance remuneration of the medical interns who had laid down their tools.

With that intervention, the medical interns called off the strike. In November 2021, Parliament approved a sh3.8 trillion supplementary budget which, among other items, included money that was required to intensify the fight against COVID-19, stimulus packages for the economy, security interventions and other pressing needs.

Following concerns from various stakeholders on arbitrary arrests, torture, and illegal detention of Ugandans by security personnel, the then Speaker instituted a probe into human rights violations through the Parliament Human Rights Committee chaired by Hon. Fox Odoi.

REPORT ON TORTURE
During the ongoing probe, the Uganda Human Rights Commission submitted a list of over 400 Ugandans who had been tortured, most of whom had been ill-treated by security agencies that included Police and the army.

Several committees of Parliament, including Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (COSASE) and the Trade Committee, have presented various reports on numerous issues of national importance.

The COSASE reports on Uganda Civil Aviation Authority unearthed the mismanagement going on in the entity, including a poorly negotiated contract for the redevelopment of Entebbe airport.

The COSASE report on Uganda Railways Corporation exposed mismanagement in the entity, including irregular give-away of public land at Nsambya, Kampala to many private individuals.

SOROTI FRUIT FACTORY
The trade, tourism and industry report on Soroti Fruit Factory exposed weaknesses in the implementation of the project and recommendations were provided on how to enable the factory live to the expectations of especially the Teso region fruit farmers.

In January, the major work of Parliament rotated on the budgeting process of scrutinising and approving the 2022/2023 National Budget Framework Paper (draft budget).

PARISH DEVELOPMENT MODEL
Among the many recommendations Parliament gave to the Executive was the need to increase the budget for the

Employees outside the Soroti Fruit Factory. Parliament made recommendations to enable the factory live up to the expectations of fruits farmers

Abdu Katuntu

MPS BANNED FROM HOTEL MEETINGS

As part of his efforts to enhance the independence of Parliament, the then Speaker, Jacob Oulanyah, on September 21, 2021 ruled that Parliament committees would no longer be allowed to have meetings in hotels organised by government entities and civil society groups.

This, Oulanyah believed, would safeguard Members of Parliament from being influenced by outsiders in making decisions.

In September 2021, medical workers petitioned Parliament on the delayed fulfillment of government commitment to enhance their salaries.

Parliament had several engagements with the Executive on the need to implement the commitments made on salary enhancement for medical workers and other scientists.

Subsequently, the Government provided sh400b in the 2022/2023 National Budget for the enhancement of salaries for medical workers and other scientists.

LEGISLATORS DISCOVERED THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO HAD BEEN TASKED WITH DISTRIBUTING THE FUNDS HAD GROSSLY MISMANAGED THE MONEY

THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

State Minister for Microfinance, Haruna Kyeyune Kasolo, launching the presidential initiative on wealth creation (Emyooga) at Masindi district headquarters in 2020

sh1,050b

Parliament made recommendations to the Executive that the budget for the Parish Development Model be increased from sh465b to sh1,050b to enable each parish get a minimum of sh100m.

Parish Development Model from sh465b to sh1,050b to enable each parish get a minimum of sh100m.

This proposal was later adopted by the Executive as the revised budget estimates presented by the planning state minister, Amos Lugoloobi, indicated that the Parish Development Model had been allocated sh1,050b.

While meeting ministers and technocrats from the finance ministry, the Parliament Budget Committee chairperson, Hon. Patrick Isiagi Opolot, said they would not have any business to conduct with them if the budget for the Parish Development Model was not increased.

MPs on the committee had raised concern that whereas the Parish Development Model is the main flagship programme for getting Ugandans out of poverty, government had allocated it meagre resources.

Both the Budget Act and Public Finance Management Act give Parliament the ultimate power to allocate resources in the national budget.

After pressure from legislators from northern Uganda and Teso sub-region as well as other engagements, the leadership of Parliament had, with the relevant ministers and MPs from the three sub-regions of Acholi, Lango and Teso, the Government expeditiously verified the cattle restocking claimants and payment commenced in April 2022.

The commencement of payment was launched by President Yoweri Museveni towards the end of April 2022 at an event in Soroti City, eastern Uganda.

The leadership of Parliament and MPs raising various issues have compelled ministers to present detailed statements on various issues of national importance.

A total of 83 ministerial statements have been presented to Parliament, 95 urgent questions responded to with written answers during the Prime Minister's Question Time, 106 resolutions passed and 123 urgent questions responded to by the ministers.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY CHARTER APPROVED

On January 27, 2022, Parliament passed a resolution for the approval of government Charter of Fiscal Responsibility for 2021/2022 to 2025/2026 with amendments, including a requirement for Government to establish a National Fiscal Council to regulate government borrowing, revenue generation and utilisation of public finances.

On September 7, 2021, Parliament passed a resolution for the Mountains of the Moon University to be taken over by government as a regional public university for the Toro region.

Over the years, the Government has been creating public universities in various regions of the country as part of its interventions in promoting balanced economic growth.

A LOT ACHIEVED

Commenting on the performance of the 11th Parliament, the Parliament Director for Communication and Public Affairs, Chris Obore, said: "A lot has been achieved through the method of negotiations, which the new leadership of Parliament emphasises as opposed to acrimony which used to characterise Parliament in the past."

Obore said unlike in the past when committees of Parliament would take long to finalise reports, in the 11th Parliament, the leadership of the House has ensured that committees complete processing work assigned to them within the deadlines stipulated in the Parliament rules of procedure.

Due to friction between the 10th Parliament and the Executive, President Yoweri Museveni declined to assent to the many Bills that Parliament had passed.

"There is now less noise in the House and more work. The new leadership of Parliament has been emphasising research-based deliberations which are founded on facts. MPs have been guided to focus on deliberations which can improve the lives of ordinary Ugandans," Obore said.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

During a parliamentary sitting that ended late at night on May 18, the House made a strong public statement in its

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PARLIAMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

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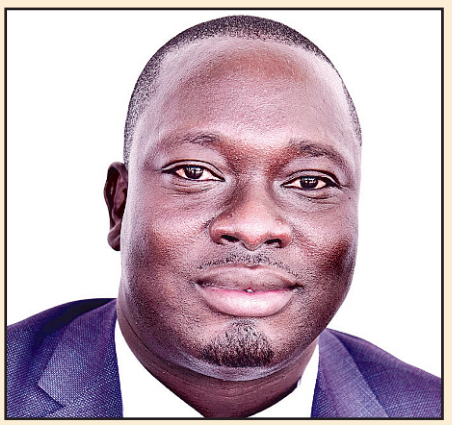
PEOPLE-CENTRED PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Commissioner and Bukholi Central MP, Hon. Solomon Silwany, says the Parliamentary Commission, which is the topmost decision-making organ of Parliament, would ensure they implement the vision the former Speaker, Jacob Oulanyah, had outlined for Parliament.

"The main mission of Oulanyah was to have a people-centred Parliament which responds quickly to the demands of the population. He had planned to do this through improving the quality of debate and encouraging members to research," Silwany said.

The vocal legislator noted that there is a plan to ensure various offices, including the offices of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, the Leader of Government Business, the Government Chief Whip and individual legislators get more researchers to help them in conducting research as is the case in Kenya, Tanzania and many other countries.

Commenting about the performance of the 11th Parliament so far, Silwany said: "Given the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges we have been facing, our performance is over 70%. Many Bills have been passed within a short period of time."



Solomon Silwany

About the Speaker Anita Annet Among and the Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa, Silwany said: "They have already made a commitment to implement the vision of Oulanyah. The two leaders are young and energetic. They will work together to build a very strong institution of Parliament."

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HOUSE BUSINESS: MPs VOW TO FIGHT CORRUPTION

The Uganda Vinci Coffee Company Ltd (centre) secretary Moses Matovu and the company's legal advisors, appearing before the Committee of Trade, Tourism and Industry recently over the agreement signed with government giving Vinci monopoly over the coffee market

public statement in its commitment to fight corruption when it passed a resolution calling for the cancellation of the agreement signed between the Government and Uganda Vinci Coffee Company Limited (UVCCL) over the monopoly to process and export coffee.

The agreement, which was signed between the Government and UVCCL on February 10, 2020, attracted public outbursts over the provisions which were giving the investor monopoly over purchase and export of coffee from the country and other benefits such as tax exemptions, which are not accorded to the other 47 investors doing the similar business.

One of the owners of the company is Italian Investor Enrica Pinetti, who had already created mistrust by failing to construct the Super Specialised Hospital at Lubowa, despite receiving government funding and loan guarantees.

The probe of the agreement by the Committee on Trade followed a petition by Kimanywa-Kabonera legislator, Hon. Dr Abed Bwanika, who said the agreement was going to result in the collapse of the coffee sub-sector.

Basing on the recommendation of the Parliament Trade Committee headed by Hon. Mpaka Mwine, Parliament also resolved that the finance minister, Hon. Matia Kasaija and other government officials who were involved should be punished.

Other recommendations by the committee were that the Government extends appropriate incentives to the already existing 47 local companies that are doing value addition; fast track the capitalisation of Uganda Development Corporation to enable it invest in soluble coffee plants to meet the international market demands; enactment of a competition law to promote vigorous competition and prevent anti-competitive business practices.

The committee in its findings established that there are 47 coffee processing and exporting companies that have been licensed by the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA). These, according to the committee, exported 6.49 million bags of 60kg in the 2019/2020 season. However, the agreement was set to render them redundant because it created a monopoly for UVCCL to purchase superior quality green coffee beans of screen 18 by restricting the Government from registering any company for export of the same.

On the same day of May 18, Parliament adopted the report of the Select Committee on Science and Technology about COVID-19 related research, in which the Minister for Science and Technology, Hon. Dr. Monica Musonero, was asked to step down pending further investigations by the Inspector General of Government (IGG) on how the research funds were utilised.

The probe followed a petition to Parliament by Ntungamo Municipality MP Hon. Yona Musinguzi, who accused Musonero of mismanaging billions of COVID-19 research funds under the Presidential Scientific Initiative on Epidemics (PRESIDE).

In the report, the committee observed that poor financial management resulted in at least 2.06 billion not being accounted for under operational funds, queried 1.4 billion for PRESIDE staff and others. The minister, who did not step down, however, explained to Parliament that there is no single coin of funds under PRESIDE that has not been accounted for and that the sh2.06b which the committee claimed could not be accounted for was never released by the finance minister.

Abed Bwanika

Matia Kasaija

Dr Monica Musenero

THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE IN ITS FINDINGS ESTABLISHED THAT THERE ARE 47 COFFEE PROCESSING AND EXPORTING COMPANIES THAT HAVE BEEN LICENSED BY THE UGANDA COFFEE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Still on May 18, Parliament adopted another equally important probe report on allocation of Naguru-Nakawa public land to private individuals.

In the ad-hoc committee, which was chaired by the Kazo County MP, Hon. Dan Kimosho, Parliament called for the firing of the current commissioners of Uganda Land Commission (ULC) for mismanaging public land by giving it away without following the right procedures.

Those that Parliament wants sacked include the ULC chairperson Beatrice Byenkya and commissioners Prof. Nyeko Pen-Mogi, Asuman Kyafu, Stella Achan, Augustine Rukiika Bujara, Charles Muhoozi, Tom Kasenge Byamugisha and Medina Nsereko.

The investors, who did not meet the pre-set criteria and qualifications for the allocation of land and their titles were recommended for cancellation include M/s Internal Medicine of Virginia PC, M/s Master Links Uganda Ltd, M/s Phaneroo Ministries and M/s Arab Oil Supplies and Exploration Ltd.

The 12 investors whose titles have been recommended for upholding and cleared for construction subject to approval of plans by Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) are; Anil Damani, Dembe Enterprises, Farkhruddin Properties Ltd, Rudra Hardware and Tools Ltd, Seven Hills, Gash Logistics Ltd, Ntinda Wholesalers, Dashen Uganda Ltd, Global Paper Products Ltd, Meera Investments and M/s Wash and Wills Country Home Ltd.

Parliament recommended several measures to safeguard government interests on the Naguru-Nakawa land, which among others, include fast tracking policy and legislative proposals to end confusion between ULC and the parent ministry, the need for ULC to have a proper inventory and land register to avoid title loss; strengthening capacity of personnel at ULC and appointment of a more technically competent commission with exposure and experience in land management.